



# Hippotherapy Practice and Safety Patterns for Older Adults

Abby Hays, BA; Beth Fields PhD, OTR/L, BCG



OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PROGRAM, DEPARTMENT OF KINESIOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

## Problem

- Hippotherapy is an equine-assisted service that uses the movement of a horse to influence treatment outcomes.<sup>2</sup>
- The efficacy of hippotherapy has been widely demonstrated across pediatric client populations.
- The use of hippotherapy for older adult clients is less understood and documented.

## Objective

To describe the practice and safety patterns of clinicians who use hippotherapy with older adults.

## Methods

- A cross-sectional Qualtrics<sup>1</sup> survey was distributed via a listserv to clinicians registered with the American Hippotherapy Association, Inc.
- Survey included: number of clinicians who worked with older adults, length of hippotherapy sessions, use of safety equipment, and number of incidents or adverse occurrences reported.
- Descriptive statistics were conducted about the practice and safety patterns.

## Contact Us

Geriatric Health Services Research Lab

ghsrl@education.wisc.edu

(608) 263-7975



GERIATRIC HEALTH SERVICES  
RESEARCH LAB



## Practice Patterns



Hippotherapy sessions lasted an average of 38.8 minutes.



Clinicians provided an average of 8.3 sessions per week.



8 out of 132 clinicians who completed the survey reported incorporating older adults in practice.



These 8 clinicians included 1 occupational therapist, 1 speech-language pathologist, and 6 physical therapists.

## Safety Patterns

- Clinicians who incorporated older adults reported 0 total incidents or adverse occurrences.
- These clinicians had the highest reported use of safety equipment out of all who responded to the survey.

## Conclusions

- To our knowledge, this is the first study to describe practice and safety patterns among clinicians who work with older adults.
- These efforts may inform the use of hippotherapy for the aging population.

## Next Steps

- Additional qualitative data to assess the quality of hippotherapy care for older adults.
- Additional studies focused specifically on clinicians who incorporate older adults

## Acknowledgments

We would like to acknowledge Dr. Peters and Erdman for devising the project and collecting the survey data.

## References

- Open camera app from cell phone.
- Hold device so that QR code appears in camera app.
- Tap the notification to open link associated with QR code.



QR Code